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SUBJECT: POLITICAL PLURALISM ON DISPLAY IN NORTH KIVU

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) During an April 12-17 visit to North Kivu, PolCouns visited and passed through villages small and large in Rutshuru and Masisi territories. Even in the smallest villages -- in some cases comprising only a few families and about 30 people -- the flags of various political parties were on display. In the smallest villages, there frequently was only one flag, usually the sky-blue with white dove emblem of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), not surprising given that the province is still effectively controlled by that party. In almost every larger village, however, the RCD blue and the PPRD (Party for Reconstruction and Development) bright yellow were flying together, indicating that despite political complications at the national level between President Kabila and Vice President Ruberwa (president of the RCD), a political accommodation amounting to a partnership has been reached on the ground, at least in this province. North Kivu Governor Serufuli several times pointed proudly to this evidence of cooperation, and PolCouns' random discussions with various villagers indicated that, indeed, the mostly RCD electorate are looking forward eagerly to voting for (independent) candidate Joseph Kabila.

¶2. (C) Also surprisingly prevalent were the bright orange flags of Olivier Kamitatu's ARC party (Alliance for Renovation and Construction) and Eugene Diomi's Christian Democrat blue-on-white banners. (Note: ARC is technically a Bandundu-based party, and the Christian Democratic party has its roots in Bas-Congo. End Note.) There were relatively few red-white-and-blue MLC (Movement for Congolese Liberation, Jean-Pierre Bemba's party) flags; indeed, in most sites these were outnumbered by the colorful flags of a host of small provincial parties.

¶3. (C) Electoral enthusiasm already is running high, and "party songs" are being popularized. At the opening of an internet center in Rutshuru town (underwritten by Governor Serufuli and Minister of Portfolio Celestin Vandabande, a fellow North Kivutian Hutu), PolCouns was treated to two different versions of the RCD rally song, apparently being tried on for size to see which would prove the most popular with the public. Of course, special patterned cloth for party attire is being produced as rapidly as possible, and particularly the women's wings of the PPRD and the RCD were proudly flaunting their allegiances in the form of skirts, wraps and blouses.

¶4. (C) Comment: The current PPRD-RCD alliance in North Kivu is not surprising. As Ruberwa's difficulties with Kabila -- and within his own party -- have increased, Serufuli's relationship with Kabila has improved. Serufuli stands to further enhance his position with both Kabila and key members

of his inner circle as well as with "moderate" elements of the RCD by working together with the PPRD to advance Kabila's candidacy. What was surprising, however, was the evident scale of ARC's and CD's respective presence. Diomi has frequently told PolCouns that for over a year he has been working to expand his party to a national base, but this visit was the first indication that he has been successful. The ARC flags were even more surprising, given that the party was only officially established about six weeks ago. However, it could well be that members of Mbusa Nyamwisi's party (whose flag was noticeably absent from Serufuli's turf) are flying the ARC flag of Mbusa's ally Kamitatu. In any event, it was good to see evidence that, at least so far, most political parties seem to be operating relatively freely in the province. End comment.

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